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Author: Gerard O'Grady  
Centre for Language and Communication Research  
Humanities Building, Colum Drive  
Cardiff University  
Cardiff CF10 3EU  
Ph. 02920 874903  
Email [ogradygn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ogradygn@cardiff.ac.uk)  
Ph. 02920874903

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#### Author's bio

Gerard O'Grady is a senior lecturer at the Centre for Language and Communication Research in Cardiff University. He is the author of *A Grammar of Spoken English Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2010) and *Key Concepts in Phonetics and Phonology* (London: Palgrave, 2012). His chief research interests are CDA, investigating connections between intonation and the lexicogrammar, examining differences between language as process and product and linear models of grammar. Address for correspondence: Centre for Language and Communication Research, Humanities Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff University, Cardiff CF10 3EU, UK <[ogradygn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ogradygn@cardiff.ac.uk)>

## **Abstract**

Before the 2010 UK general election the leaders of the three major political parties engaged in three televised debates. In the debates they were prohibited from directly engaging with one another and from infringing on their rivals' speaking rights. The leaders attempted to exercise power through positive face attacks. Previous evidence has indicated that in the UK quality face attacks are more severe than social-identity face attacks. I investigate the communicative value of key, the pitch height of the initial onset syllable, in which the leaders pitched their face attacks, and illustrate that the type, amount and key of face attacks changed across the debates. In the final debate there was an increased use of high key, which added salience to positive face attacks. It was noticeable that only the candidate behind in the polls consistently selected high key to boost his quality face attacks. The others tended to pitch quality face attacks with mid key. I illustrate that selection of key established the context in which the face attack was to be understood and show that a fuller understanding of face work in political debate requires an account of the implicatures generated by prosodic selections such as key.

**Key words:** Intonation; key; face management; implicature; political debate.

## 1 Introduction

Prior to the 2010 general election the leaders of the three major UK wide political parties engaged in a series of televised debates. The debates, detailed in Section 2, were a novel event in British politics. Opinion polls prior to the opening debate suggested that no party was on track to command an absolute majority. While there is some evidence from outside the UK, e.g. (Schrott (1990) and Coleman (2000), (though see Forrest and Marks (2003) for a contrary view), that success in pre-electoral debates can decisively shape the outcome of an election the impact of the UK debates was unknown. What was known however was that prior to the first debate 60% of respondents stated that the debates would be important in forming their electoral choices. For the three leaders it was important that they be seen as winners in the debates.

The debates were structured in a manner that prohibited the leaders from infringing on their rivals' speaking rights. As a result one of their chief means of exercising power was to engage in positive face attacks when referring to their rivals. While some work such as Harris (2001), discussed below, has focused on negative face attacks in British Parliamentary debates, no work has yet investigated the prosody of face work in political debates. Indeed with the major exception of Culpeper et al (2002) and Arndt and Janney (1987), previous work on face has focused solely on the lexicogrammatical structure of face threatening acts. Culpeper et al (2002:1568ff.) illustrate that the use of a falling or rising tone contra to the prevailing expectations may alter the illocutionary nature of a speech act. In a similar manner, Arndt and Janney (1987) illustrate that prosodic

patterns that are marked by not matching the contextually appropriate prosodic patterns assist the hearer in disambiguating the message by projecting an intended implicature.

In this paper I examine how the leaders projected the communicative value of *key*, when managing their rivals' face. Brazil (1997:12) identifies *key* as referring to the relative pitch height of the onset syllable. It may be pitched as high, mid or low. Within the debates the leaders referred to their rivals' quality and social-identity faces (Spencer-Oatey: 2000 & 2005), but it was noticeable that high *key* was mainly employed to increase the salience of social-identity face attacks.

This introduction is divided into two parts. In the first part I detail the structure of the debates and show how the restriction of access to the conversational floor restrained the means by which the leaders could potentially exercise 'power' over their rivals. The leaders instead exercised power through face work which I ground in terms of how they signaled to the voting public their affiliation and disaffiliation from their rivals. I interpret face not as an individual construct based on intentional speaker actions, but rather as a construct that emerges from the interaction between the political leader and the voting audience. In the second section I review intonational theory in order to demonstrate how prosody projects discrete categorical meaning, and using insights gleaned from Relevance Theory illustrate how the selection of high *key* generates contextually bound implicatures.

### 1.1 Face and Televised Pre-election Debate

The debates followed the so called ‘333 formula’ with three debates between the three main party leaders, Gordon Brown the Labour Prime Minister, David Cameron of the main opposition Conservative party and Nick Clegg from the Liberal Democrats, happening over three weeks. Each debate lasted ninety minutes and was moderated by a well-known TV journalist. The broadcaster selected eight questions for discussion from those submitted in advance by members of the handpicked studio audience. The questions were chosen on the basis of topicality, distinctiveness between the parties’ political positions and relevance to the role of Prime Minister. The politicians were not informed of the questions in advance, though the theme of each debate had been agreed beforehand. Four questions had to be on the given theme while the remaining four could potentially be off theme.

The debates were designed to ensure that there would be no interaction between the party leaders. The structure of the debates is set out in (1) in terms of Hasan’s (1996) Generic Structure Potential model.

1. moderator Introduction ^ leaders’ introductory statements {^ audience question ^ leader’s response to audience question ^ leaders’ response to other leaders’ responses ^ *moderator summation* ^ *<free debate* ^ *moderator intervention*>} ^ moderator wrap up ^ leaders’ concluding remarks

Optional elements are in italics; recursive elements are situated within curly brackets. The stages within the curly brackets were repeated 8 times prior to moving on to the next stage. The symbols ^ ^ refer to the temporal ordering of

the stages. Underlining indicates that the element could occur at any time within the angled brackets. The ordering of the politicians as first, second or third respondent was decided by lot and rotated per question. Each politician was given an identical amount of time to make his opening statement, respond to questions, respond to the other leaders and make his concluding statement. In the optional free debate section the moderator nominated which leader was to speak and for how long. On the very few occasions where the leaders attempted to interrupt one another or speak beyond their allocated time the moderator immediately sanctioned them. In (2) the moderator, David Dimbleby, prohibited Clegg from interrupting what he claimed was a misrepresentation of his party's immigration policy.

2. Brown: ... because there is a suggestion that there is an amnesty after ten years for people who come to this country illegally ...

Clegg: Maybe I should explain

Moderator: I'll give you a chance to explain in a moment

Brown: well I think to send out this message is wrong

Studies of pre-election debates held outside the UK have noted that when the rules have restricted the debaters from directly addressing their rivals they have asserted their power through a combination of positive self-presentation and the negative depiction of their rivals. Garcia-Pastor (2008:121) reported that in American Presidential debates politicians engaged in a zero sum game consisting of "negativity cycles" consisting of sequences of positive and negative face aggravating acts. Locher's (2004) study of the 2000 US Presidential debate and Blas Arroyo's (2003) study of 1993 Spanish pre-electoral debate indicated that

politicians engage in conflictive verbal jousting consisting of face threatening acts. These face threatening acts are to an extent normalized by the audience's expectations that politicians in the pursuit of power will engage in some impolite behavior. Yet Galasinski (1998:180) reported that a Polish candidate whose rudeness flouted his audience's expectations of permissible political discourse was severely punished at the ballot box. It is not clear, however, whether rudeness was a significant contributing factor to his electoral demise.

The major difference between the UK debates and those reported above was that the UK debate was between three and not two competing candidates. Election polls immediately prior to the first debate indicated that neither of the major parties was likely to secure an overall majority. Post election the Liberal Democrats were predicted to hold the balance of power. The debates provided Brown and Cameron not only with the opportunity to gain voters from the Liberal Democrats but also to woo the Liberal Democrats as potential coalition partners.

The outcome of the first debate on domestic affairs was a shock with opinion polls proclaiming Clegg the clear winner. Post debate opinion polls recorded the Liberal Democrats polling ahead of Labour. The second debate was on international affairs. Unlike the first debate there was no clear winner, though Clegg emerged slightly ahead with Brown slightly behind. The final debate was on economic affairs and Cameron emerged as the narrow victor over Clegg with Brown slightly behind in third place.



Within the debates the party leaders engaged in a confrontational discursual struggle aimed at persuading members of the voting audience to vote for their party candidates. In terms of the framework established by Goffman (1981:146) the non-physically and physically present voters are “ratified listeners”, participants who do not have the floor but have the right to interject their feelings into the temporal interstices within or between [the speaking] interchanges”. The rival leaders and the moderator were ostensible receivers. Political elites from other countries were bystanders who while capable of influencing the message were not the primary target. Those lacking the ability to influence the message such as non-nationals and minors were over-hearers. During the course of the three debates the leaders projected their affiliation or disaffiliation from their rivals in order to boost their own self-face or lower that of their rivals.

Goffman (1967:5) defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself (sic) by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” The face invested in an individual is constantly being updated by the changing cognitive and emotional reactions of those making up the wider society (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003:1458). Terkourafi (2008:54), drawing upon the evolutionary linguistics literature, states that phylogenetically and ontogenetically the manipulative function of language is prior to its referential and descriptive use. Speakers deploy language to manipulate their hearers’ physical, perceptual, emotional or cognitive reactions by projecting their wish to approach or withdraw from their interactants. This view as Terkourafi, herself, notes accords with views of face which ground the concept in

terms of “the dialectical opposition between the connection with others and separation from them” (Arundale 2006:193). Face emerges and is subsequently maintained, raised or lowered through the interaction of the speakers’ words with the emotional, physical or perceptual reactions of the ratified listeners.

Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) recast the concept of face as an individual construct based on the intentional actions of rational actors engaged in strategic goal-orientated communication. Their view of face has been much criticized as being incapable of describing spoken interactions arising outside Anglo-American culture and of highlighting individual intention at the expense of interactional meaning (see Culpeper (2011:24–46) and Watts (2003:98–103) for an overview). Despite the problems inherent in Brown and Levinson’s theory, the data studied here represents the utterances of Anglophone rational actors engaged in strategic goal-orientated communication, and, thus, their concept of face threatening acts (ibid: 60) is of practical relevance to this paper. They subdivided face into positive and negative components. Negative face refers to the wants of each individual not to have their actions impeded by others while positive face refers to the wants of each individual to be desired by others. Harris (2001:462) argues that the negative/positive face distinction is superfluous as negative and positive face frequently co-occur.<sup>1</sup> After all if in the course of a televised pre-electoral debate politician A succeeds in lowering politician B’s positive face it is likely that he/she will also have negatively impeded B’s freedom by impinging upon his/her desire to be elected.

In a series of papers Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005 and 2007) has developed a theory of rapport management where speakers manage face in on-going interaction by projecting meanings contrary to or supportive with previously created positive or negative expectations. She initially subdivided positive face into two categories: quality face, which refers to people's desire to be evaluated positively for their individual personal characteristics such as honesty, diligence and competence, and social-identity face which refers to people's desire to be evaluated positively in terms of their assumed social identity, role or occupation. In 2007 Spencer-Oatey proposed her third category, relational face, in order to allow her to refer to the relationship between speakers who shared the same role (p. 647). Relational face unlike the other two categories depends on intra-group interaction. As I examine how the production of inter-leader affiliative/disaffiliative references and the expectations of the ratified listeners co-constructed the leaders' face I focus on quality and social-identity face.

As the debates were a first for the UK the ratified listeners had to rely on related political discourses such as the weekly-televised Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQ) to form their expectations of the type of discourse practices political leaders could legitimately engage in while debating their rivals. Harris (2001) in an investigation of impoliteness in PMQ found that debaters were expected, according to the discourse practices of the House, to engage in threatening their rivals' positive face. British television viewers prior to the debates were likely to have been primed that the three leaders would seek to exercise power over their rivals through the production of positive face threatening acts. Before examining the leaders' facework in the debates the following section illustrates how the

intonation system of key can potentially increase or decrease the salience of an affiliative/disaffiliative reference.

## 1.2 Intonation in interaction: a pragmatic account

While there is general agreement that the meaning of intonation is essentially pragmatic (Hirschberg 2004:515) much research into the meaning of intonation has taken place within two not necessarily compatible frameworks (Zellers and Post 2012). Scholars such as Brazil (1997), Gussenhoven (2004), Halliday and Greaves (2008), Ladd (2008) and Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1990) argue that intonational meaning is compositional and discrete. In contrast the numerous scholars inspired by interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis who contributed work to volumes such as Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (1996); Couper-Kuhlen and Ford (2004), Barth-Weingarten et al (2009), and Barth-Weingarten et al (2010) adopt a contextualized holistic approach to the speech signal. They examine how prosodic variation results in different sequential behaviors within the conversation. For instance, Kaimaki (2011:2138) has illustrated that the combination of a rising tone movement, longer duration and a diminution of loudness on the second syllable of the word *hello* spoken when answering the telephone results in a change of speaker.

An important difference between the two approaches is that the latter studies the co-occurrence of prosody with conversational behavior at turn transition points, while the former is concerned with the transmission of linguistic information. While being able to study how changes in prosody correlate with changes in behavior is clearly a methodological strength, scholars interested in

studying prosodic meaning in non-face-to-face interactions are not directly able to examine hearer behavior. Instead they must focus on observing regularities in their prosodic analysis and use their insider knowledge as members of their own speech communities to attribute meaning to prosodic choices (Kern 2010:219).

As stated in the introduction, this paper focuses on David Brazil's system of key (Brazil 1997:11, Cheng et al 2008 and O'Grady 2010).<sup>2</sup> Key is the pitch level choice associated with the onset or first prominent syllable in a tone unit. Brazil classified key choices as high, mid or low relative to the height of the previous onset. Brazil (1997) postulated that a mid key was the unmarked choice, and that high or low key projected additional meaning. A high key projects contrast with the previously generated expectations while a low key projects equivalence with the previously generated expectations. Couper-Kuhlen (2001), based on a chat show host's behavior, argues that the presence of a high onset functions as a contextualization cue; a caller to chat radio is providing the reason for their call. While she does not ascribe a general meaning such as Brazil's key to the selection of high onsets she notes that they convey a feeling of disruption to the interaction.

In Example (3) I illustrate meanings proposed by Brazil and others through the selection of key. The starred examples are constructed variants of the options chosen by Gordon Brown. Prominent syllables are underlined and tone unit boundaries notated by a vertical bar. The tonic syllable is the final prominent syllable in the tone unit. Small capital H and L immediately prior to the onset

signal high and low key. Example (3a) contains a high key, (3b) a mid key, and (3c) a low key.

3. |He Hwants these savings on \top of that|

3b\* |He wants these savings on \top of that|

3c\* |He Lwants these savings on \top of that|

Sperber and Wilson (1995) theorize that language carries a presumption of relevance, and that human cognition is relevance orientated. Speakers speak in order to alter their hearers' cognitive environments: the set of manifest facts available to an interlocutor. Hearers follow the path of least effort and stop at the first interpretation that satisfies their expectation of relevance. They are entitled not only to assume that the verbal stimulus used is relevant enough to be worth their attention but also that it is the most relevant one commensurate with the speaker's abilities and preferences. By producing high or low key speakers signal an additional contextually bound implication that requires more cognitive effort to interpret.

The choice of key establishes the context in which the utterance and its implicatures are to be understood (House 2006:1542, Wilson & Wharton 2006:1570 and Wharton 2012:106). Hearers interpret the utterance by stopping at the first interpretation which results in a real cognitive effect by (a) strengthening an existing assumption, (b) contradicting or eliminating an existing assumption or (c) combining with an existing assumption to yield contextual implications (Wilson and Matsui 2012:201). In (3a) the high key

signals to the hearer that the most relevant assumption they can make will be one contrary to their expectations while in (3c) it will be one equivalent to their expectations.

Depending on an individual listener's political position individual instances of high and low key may be redundant. For committed Labor supporters the fact that Cameron's additional savings were projected in (3a) as having consequences contrary to expectations was redundant. They were unlikely to believe that the extra cuts would do anything other than harm the economy. Conversely, committed Conservatives were unlikely to find the desirability of the extra-proposed savings contrary to their previous expectations or wishes. A low key would have overtly projected to committed Labor supporters that the proposed extra cuts and their resultant consequences were entirely predictable. The effect was likely to have been to signal a shared membership in a political struggle. For Conservative supporters the low key projected a meaning similar to that projected by a mid key.

Crucially, however, the salience of the high key, by projecting that the most relevant assumption will be contrary to expectations, assists floating voters by establishing the context for the utterance. Brown signals that the extent of Cameron's projected cuts is contrary to what could normally be expected. Listeners willing to invest more cognitive effort may be able to generate richer implicatures (O'Halloran 2003:162), such as (a) more saving entails poorer public services, (b) less money in the economy entails higher unemployment, (c) higher unemployment entails increased poverty and (d) increased poverty

entails lower social cohesion and so on.

### 1.3 Face and Key in political debate

During the course of the debates the leaders in an attempt to boost their self-face and lower/boost their rivals' face produced utterances that signaled their closeness or distance from their rivals. Such utterances interacted with the expectations of the ratified listeners to constitute the politicians' face. The use of affiliative utterances was designed not only to boost the speaker's own positive face but also the intended target's positive face. Simultaneously in a three party interaction non-affiliation was designed to lower positive face.

Culpeper's (2011:44–53) empirical finding that quality face is more salient than social-identity face in British culture suggests that attacks on opponents' quality face are more likely to be noticed by the ratified listeners. Yet it remains unclear whether or not unmitigated attacks on an opponent's quality face are effective. It is possible that they are too strong, and rebound and inadvertently lower the attacker's self-face.

A speaker's key choice provides a context for their utterances with high key adding salience by signaling the unexpectedness of the following utterance and the resulting implicatures. A high key can potentially boost the severity of disaffiliative references by signaling that the target's actions, thoughts or words are beyond normal expectations. Yet audiences may sanction overly aggressive political debaters (Galasinski 1998). This suggests that the keying of face attacks, especially quality face attacks, will be strategic and intentional.



With the above in mind I examine:

- How the proportion and frequency of quality versus social-identity face work changed in inter-leader references across the debates; and
- Whether the leaders' used key to increase the salience of their face attacks.

## 2. Data, methodology and coding

I read through the orthographic transcripts of the debates and extracted all the utterances where a leader referred to a rival's character, words, or deeds, or to the actions and proposals of a rival party.<sup>3</sup> In total Brown produced 131 references, Clegg 74 references and Cameron 98 references to their rivals. I subsequently classified all references as referring to their rival's quality face or social-identity face. Finally I identified the key in which the reference was spoken.

I identified instances of quality face in inter-leader references as those that included lexical items which overtly referred to a leader's honesty, veracity and capability e.g. (4). It was noticeable that no instances of leaders boosting their rivals' quality face were located in the data.

### 4. |HDavid is \wrong|to mislead people about his \cap|

References, such as (4), position the target as an individual with personal qualities that conflict with the audience's expectations of the qualities individuals fulfilling the role of politician should possess.

I classed instances of social-identity face in inter-leader references as those that boosted or lowered a rival's face in terms of how they were evaluated in terms of their roles and identity as politicians e.g. (5) to (8). References to social-identity face sometimes contained overt lexical clues e.g. (5) and (6), but on occasions e.g. (7) and (8), they did not. Utterances that contained an overt lexical projection of support such as example (5) were classed as raising face.

5. |I agree with uh ... \Nick|an arbitrary national cap will not L\workL|

Statements such as (6) that contained an overt lexical projection of criticism were classed as face threatening.

6. |The risk to the H\economy|is LLabour's \proposall|of a \jobs tax|

In order to classify references that did not contain an overt projection of support or criticism I read them within their individual contexts in order to investigate whether the reference raised or lowered face. Such a procedure necessarily involved subjectivity but I decided that the benefits of including all the affiliative/disaffiliative references outweighed the risks introduced by my subjective, albeit informed, understanding. Examples (7) and (8) are illustrative.

7. |Yet /again |the old parties said /no|

In the surrounding co-text Clegg had advocated the importance of political reform, so (7) amounts to an indirect disaffiliation with the policies of the other two leaders. Brown produced (8) in response to a query that the political parties are unnecessarily antagonistic. He signaled his affiliation with the Liberal

Democrats by reminding the audience that he had previously trusted Liberal Democrats to work with his government.

8. |I invited one or two /Liberals|to do \things|like \show you| Shirley  
L/Williams|to do things for the L/government|

There were 6 occasions where leaders produced an inter-leader reference that served only to frame their contribution to the debate e.g. (9).

9. |To stop H/illegal migration|which is what LNICK has L/referred to|border  
controls have been brought /in|

Brown's reference to Clegg neither affiliated nor disaffiliated. Instead it functioned to remind the audience of the prior discussion and provided context for Brown to present his own policies. Inter-leader references such as (9) that neither affiliate nor disaffiliate have been discounted from the analysis.

The leaders produced 297 inter-leader face affiliative/disaffiliative references in the three debates (see Fig 1).

Figure 1 About Here

As can be seen references that lowered social-identity face were by far the most frequent. Around half the references that lowered face occurred in the third debate; this is evidence that between Brown and Cameron the debates became more rancorous.

I recorded the three debates, though because of a problem with the time setting of the recorder the final 256 words of debate 1, 154 words of debate 2 and 211 words of debate 3 were not recorded. There were, however, no inter-leader references in the non-recorded segments. I edited the 297 inter-leader references plus preceding verbal context into wav files, and transcribed the examples with the assistance of Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2010).

Key was transcribed as the relative onset level compared to the previous onset; it is the pitch level of the initial prominent syllable in a tone unit. In order to locate the first prominent syllable in a tone unit, following the British tonetic tradition (e.g. Crystal 1969: 210–218, Cruttenden 1997:87–103, Halliday and Greaves 2008:40-60), I transcribed the debates into tone units. I tentatively identified tone unit boundaries through the presence of an optional boundary pause, a change in tempo and the presence of a tonic accent. Next I notated prominent syllables within tone units; the perception of prominence in English corresponds with the syllable occurring on a rhythmic beat, having greater length, being louder and containing a turning point in the  $F_0$  contour. The tonic accent was identified as the most salient accent in the tone unit. It is the tone unit final prominent syllable and is followed by both a phrase accent and a boundary tone (Ladd 2008:133). Onset syllables were identified as the first prominent syllable following a tonic. The actual location of the tone unit boundary is immaterial to the present analysis. Spectrograph 1, spoken by Gordon Brown, shows two tone units containing two onset syllables *I* and *vited*. The second onset was heard as not representing a significant step up or step down; it had the

same key as the earlier one.

Spectrograph 1 around here

Hearers perceive changes in  $F_0$  as pitch movements but the relation is not one to one. Accordingly, I set the pitch setting in Praat to Hertz (logarithmic) to better capture a visual representation of a hearer's perception (see Szczepek Reed (2011:26) and Nolan (2003) for discussion on the non-linear nature of speech perception and production). Spectrograph 2 illustrates two tone units with mid key on the syllables *Cam* and *pay*. Spectrograph 3 illustrates a tone unit with high key on *fra* followed by one on *both* stepped down to mid key.

Spectrographs 2 and 3 around here

As key is transcribed relative to the immediately prior onset level it is necessary to establish the prior key level to which the immediately following key can be compared. Thus, I first established the key of the initial onset in the paratone containing the inter-leader reference. The opening of a paratone is signaled by a reset of pitch level following a fall to the bottom of the speaker's register in the previous paratone. There is usually an extended pause between paratones (Tench 1996, Wennerstrom 2001:106 and Wichmann 2001:10ff). Paratone initial high keys were calculated, following Couper-Kuhlen (1986:103), as those where the initial onset syllable represented a high level in the speaker's voice range (see also Crystal 1969:144–148). Once the level of paratone initial key had been established the remaining keys within the paratone were classed relative to the immediately preceding one in terms of whether or not they represented an audible stepping up or down of pitch. I used visual representations produced by

hand on Praat to re-enforce the auditory judgments. In order to minimize the risks of octave jumps the pitch settings were adjusted to the range of each leader's voice with the window set between 75Hz – 300Hz for Cameron and Clegg and between 50Hz – 200Hz for Brown.

Spectrographs 4 and 5 illustrate paratones with initial high and mid key respectively produced by David Cameron.

Spectrographs 4 and 5 around here

Figures 2 to 4 illustrate the selection of tone unit initial key in the inter-leader references that lowered quality face, and lowered and raised social identity face.

Figures 2 to 4 around here

It is immediately noticeable that Gordon Brown's behavior differed from the other two leaders in the second and third debates. He alone pitched the majority of his social-identity face threatening remarks with high key, while in the third debate he pitched the majority of his quality face attacks with high key. I conducted a series of  $\chi^2$  tests on the three debates in order to check if the three leaders' behavior differed significantly.

Table 1: The leaders' keying of Social-identity and Quality FTAs compared

Speakers	Debate 1	Debate 2	Debate 3
GB and NC	0.863	7.057**	12.267***
GB and DC	2.231	3.706	13.467***
DC and NC	2.643	2.237	1.813

df = 1 \*\* = p < 0.01 and \*\*\* = p < 0.001

It is clear that in the second and especially the third debate that Brown's strategic keying of his face attacks differed significantly from that of the other two leaders. Yet in order to fully explicate the leader's face strategies it is necessary to consider who the target of their attacks were.

### 3. Discussion

As well as producing face threatening inter-leader references the leaders on occasions produced supportive inter-leader references. It is noticeable, however, that the majority of the supportive references occurred in the opening debate. Brown in particular attempted to align himself with Clegg. With one exception – discussed below – his selection of mid key, e.g. (10), projected that his projected alignment with Clegg was not contrary to the ratified listeners prevailing expectations. Simultaneously he attempted to distance both himself and Clegg from Cameron.

10. |Where Nick and I are L\agreed L|is that to Hgive an \inheritance tax cut L  
|to the three thousand Lrichest estates in the L\country|of Htwo hundred  
thousand \pounds each|the Hbiggest manifesto promise that the  
\Conservatives made|is totally \unfair|

(11) was the sole example where Brown projected his support with high key. He did so in response to a counter-claim from Clegg that there were significant differences between their parties' views on political reform. In response Brown

signaled that while his audience would find his claim contrary to their expectations he stood by it.

11. |Now Nick H\supports me|in Hreforming the House of Commons and the House of \LordsL|

Yet when Clegg emerged as an electoral threat Brown abandoned his strategy of signaling overt support of Clegg.

In all three debates Nick Clegg attempted to distance himself from his rivals. He only produced 7 affiliative remarks of which one, e.g. (12), aligned himself with both Brown and Cameron. In these cases it is noticeable that his support was pitched with mid key and qualified.

12. |They /now| which is /good|say they H\do welcome that|

13. |Uh David Cameron has -ideas|which help \some|

14. |Gordon Brown has H\some ideas|which help some of the most \needy|

On the two occasions that he projected his support with high key the high key co-occurred with the idiom *of course* signaling in (15) that the only thing that was contrary to expectations was Brown's need to state the obvious. (15) can be read as an attack on Brown's political insight aimed at lowering his social-identity face.

15. |of H\course|Gordon Brown's /right|saying there's a \linkL|

David Cameron avoided inter-leader references that signaled his support for Nick Clegg. One of his two high key inter-leader affiliative references, (e.g. 16) to Brown, simultaneously ridiculed Clegg's immigration policy. The unexpectedness



of what he is about to say was magnified by his choice of lexis. The other, (17), projected Cameron's surprise at, and perhaps implied his doubts of, Brown's admiration for the army.

16. | H I would never utter these /words|but I agree with /GordonH|

17. |I Hcompletely agree with Gordon \ Brown |about ... the bravery of our forcesL|

Yet as the vast majority of the inter-leaders' references, as Figs 2 to 4 illustrate, attempted to lower their rivals' face, the totality of their face strategies can only be fully understood by considering who the target of the attack was, the nature of the face attack and the key in which it was delivered.

Nick Clegg, as noted above, adopted a strategy of distancing himself from his two rivals. He also produced far fewer inter-leader references especially in the second and third debates than did the other two leaders. Figure 5 details Nick Clegg's face attack strategies in the three debates.

Figure 5 about here
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Clegg frequently conflated the other two leaders and their parties in his criticisms, e.g. (18).

18. |It was Conservative and Labour \ /Governments|that created Hchaos in your \ /immigration system|

As the debates progressed Clegg reduced the co-occurrence of high key with social-identity face threatening references. This was perhaps because he felt that

his increased support in the polls indicated that his views were no longer contrary to the audience's expectations. In the third debate Clegg with a sole exception, (e.g. 21) discussed below, only threatened his rivals' quality face using mid key e.g.

19. |You wanted to \protect|Lord Ashcroft in his offshore \haven|in H\Belize|
20. |You wanted to protect the H\paymasters|of the ... of the trade union  
|paymasters|

These examples illustrate one of Clegg's chief tactics in differentiating himself; namely projecting his rivals as being the servants of special interest groups. Because of the potentially damaging implications of labeling his opponents corruptible he projected his rivals' funding sources as troubling, but in line with the voters' expectations of political practice.

21. |And this is where I Hreally \disagree with|David Cameron and Gordon  
|Brown|is Htry and fool you into \thinking| that just H\efficiency savings  
is enough|

In (21) Clegg attacked the quality face of his two rivals by accusing them of dissembling. His selection of high key projected his allegation as being contrary to expectations. Yet, it was hardly surprising that politicians attempted to frame their messages to their advantage. The surprise engendered by the high key was that Clegg was a different sort of politician; one who was honest and upfront with the voters.

Figure 6 around here

Figure 6 indicates that Cameron's inter-leader references signaled that he projected Brown as his major rival. He pitched the vast majority of his face threatening attacks with mid key. In the final debate he produced a higher number of high keys, an escalation possibly mutually re-enforced by Brown's own increased use of high key. Cameron distanced himself from Brown by attacking Brown's quality and social-identity face. However, he tended to pitch his quality face attacks with mid key, e.g.

22. |Those leaflets you have been getting from \/Labour|those letters you have been getting from \/Labour|are pure and simple \/lies|\

23. |He's trying again to \/frighten people|and actually he should be ashamed of what he's \/doing|\

In (22) and (23) Cameron accused Brown, as the leader of the Labor party, of distributing lies in order to frighten voters from voting for the Conservatives. However, by selecting mid key he projected a context where Brown's actions while morally reprehensible were not out of bounds in the field of politics. Had he made his face threatening attacks more salient he would have projected that Brown's and Labor's actions were contrary to expectations, and implied that neither Brown nor Labor were morally fit for office. Such an attack could potentially have led to the audience questioning what their expectations of acceptable political behavior was and generated implicatures not necessarily favorable to any politician. That said Cameron in the first debate pitched a

quality face attack with high key, but as noted in example (21) the projected counter-expectation was not that Brown dissembled but that Cameron wouldn't!

24. |I just want to go H\back | to what I think \Gordon | Hdidn't \really tell you |

In contrast Cameron was far less reticent about pitching social-identity face attacks with high key when it suited his strategic need. In (24) he projected his view that the audience would be incredulous to have heard Brown's claim that his government was interested in parliamentary reform.

25. |And H\Gordon we've had|you have had Hthirteen Hyears|to sort out the House of H\Lords|

Yet, he projected the majority of his social-identity face attacks with mid key. By so doing he projected that the audience would have no difficulty in accepting his critical depiction of the Labor government's economic record and the validity of his social-identity face threatening acts, e.g. (26)

26. |Thirteen years in which inequality's got /worse|in which deep poverty's got /worse|

Brown, as noted above, initially sought to align himself with Clegg, but when Clegg emerged as an electoral threat his behavior changed. In the second debate he attacked the Liberal's policies on defense and immigration. In the final debate he even produced a mid key affiliative reference to David Cameron signaling that

Cameron was correct to criticize the Liberal Democrats' immigration policies. Brown pitched his face-threatening remarks with mid and high key, e.g. (27) and (28). In (27) his use of mid key did not add salience to his attack by projecting it as contrary to the audience's expectations but in (28), which he produced later in the same debate, his selection of high key strengthened an already severe attack on Clegg's social-identity face by projecting that Clegg's views on Britain's relationship with the USA were contrary to expectations. An implicature is that no politician with such a foreign policy could be entrusted with the safety of the nation.

27. |Nick is anti /American|

28. |HYour anti- Americanism will not \help usL|

In the third debate Brown expressly connected Clegg's policies with Cameron's. Clegg, like Cameron, was a risk. Clegg, Brown alleged, lacked the capacity to adequately lead the nation.

29. |I'm hafraid the HLiberal and Conservative \policies| are Htoo big a \risk|  
to inflation and to interest rates for the \futureL|

Figure 7 around here
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Throughout the course of the three debates Brown's chief target, see Figure 7, was unsurprisingly David Cameron. In the second debate, and especially the third debate when opinion polls had indicated that he was not likely to retain power, he emphasized his distance from Cameron through the increased use of

social-identity face attacks – the majority of which were pitched with high key. Brown consistently attacked the unfairness of Cameron’s economic plan to reduce public spending while cutting higher rates of tax.

30. |The H**biggest** man**ifesto** promise that the \Con**serv**atives made|is totally  
\\un**fair**|

31. |If H**David** wants \\fairness in the tax system|why does he support this  
/inheritance tax Lcut| for only H**three thousand** \\families|

In both examples Brown added salience to his attack by projecting Cameron’s policy as being contrary to existing expectations. He generates the implicature that politicians should not foster unfairness. By standing against increased unfairness Brown attempted to boost his own self-face.

In comparison with the number of social-identity face attacks, Brown produced relatively few quality face attacks; though it is worth noting that 13 out of the 22 quality face attacks occurred in the final debate, and that 9 of them were pitched with high key. This suggests that in an attempt to reverse Cameron’s electoral advantage Brown had adopted a much more aggressive strategy vis-à-vis Cameron, e.g. (32). Brown charged him not just with being wrong, but also with misleading the voters. This is a potentially highly damaging attack on Cameron’s quality face; he was labeled as incompetent and mendacious.

32. |H**David** is \\wrong to mis**lead** people about his \\capL|

To summarize, Brown and Cameron marked each other as being their chief rivals. They, however, adopted different strategies. Cameron produced few quality face attacks, which he projected as being not contrary to expectations. He signaled that Brown's weaknesses were a matter of public record. Brown was more aggressive and projected the majority of his social identity face attacks as being contrary to expectations. Cameron's policies, he implied, were not what the audience believed them to be. He further produced a number of quality face attacks that he made more salient by pitching them with high key; Cameron's character, he implied, was not what the audience believed it to be. Nick Clegg's face, except in the opening debate, was largely ignored by the other two. He himself attempted to distance himself by producing inter-leader references that lowered both his opponents' social identity face and signaled that he was a different kind of politician.

#### 4. Conclusion

The overwhelming frequency of social-identity face attacks compared to the relative paucity of quality face attacks in the debates provides support for the view (e.g. Culpepper 2011) that in Britain quality face attacks are more severe than social-identity face attacks. Cameron and Clegg both of whom enjoyed relative success in the debates tended to pitch their face attacks with mid key though neither was adverse to selecting high key to accompany social-identity face attacks. Yet, because of the potential severity of adding salience to quality face attacks they tended to avoid pitching them with high key.

Brown, by contrast, was the loser of the first debate and in an effort to claw back

lost support he adopted a high-risk aggressive strategy. In the second and third debates he increased the number of his face attacks and pitched the majority of them with high key. He projected that his attacks would be contrary to the ratified listeners' expectations. In so doing he invited them to reconsider what they knew about Cameron's social identity as a politician and quality as a human being. As Brown's performance was rated better in the final debate it seems clear that he was not harshly sanctioned for his aggressive face work. Yet, his strategy was not effective in that he did not succeed in gaining sufficient votes to remain in power.

### **End notes**

1. See also Brown and Levinson (1987:67) where they classify some acts such as interrupting talk as simultaneously disregarding negative and positive face wants.
2. This is not meant to imply that meanings projected by key choices are more significant than those projected by other intonational systems such as tone, tonicity or tonality. Nor indeed is key necessarily unrelated to speech rate, voice quality or loudness.
3. The official transcripts are available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/election\\_2010/the\\_debates/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/election_2010/the_debates/default.stm) (last accessed January 16 2014)

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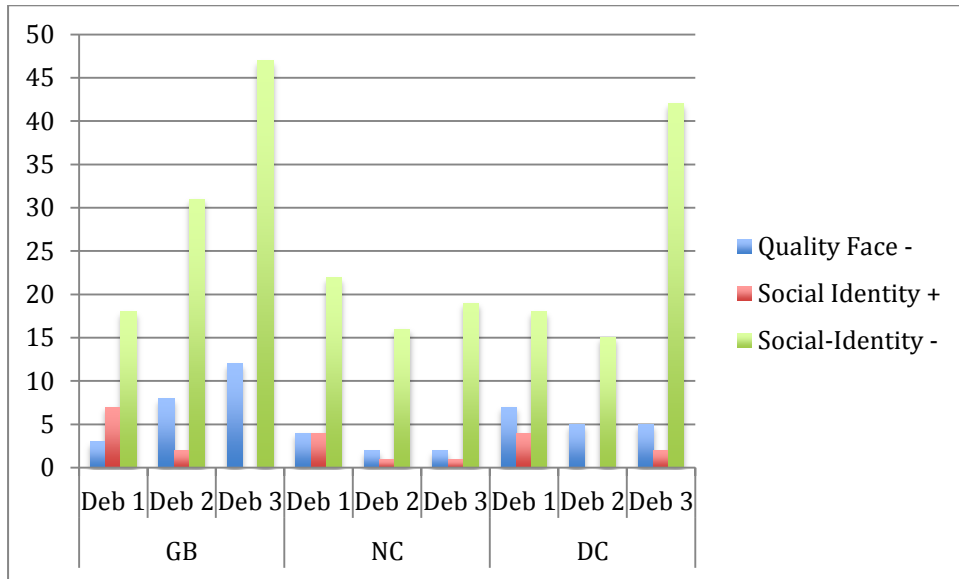
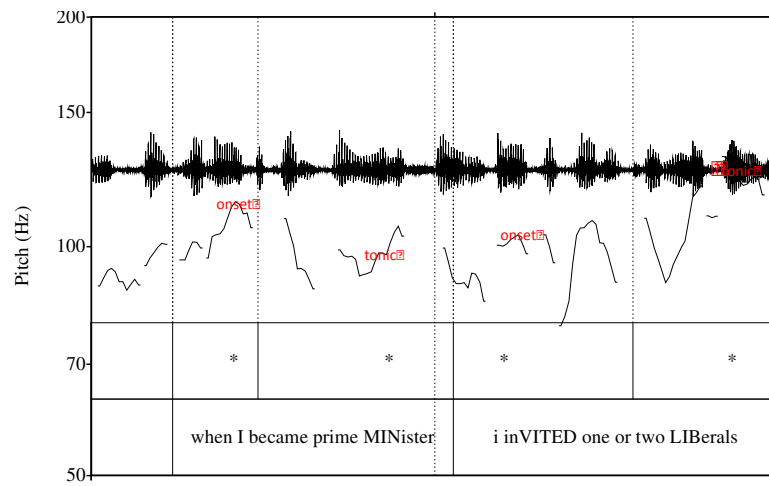
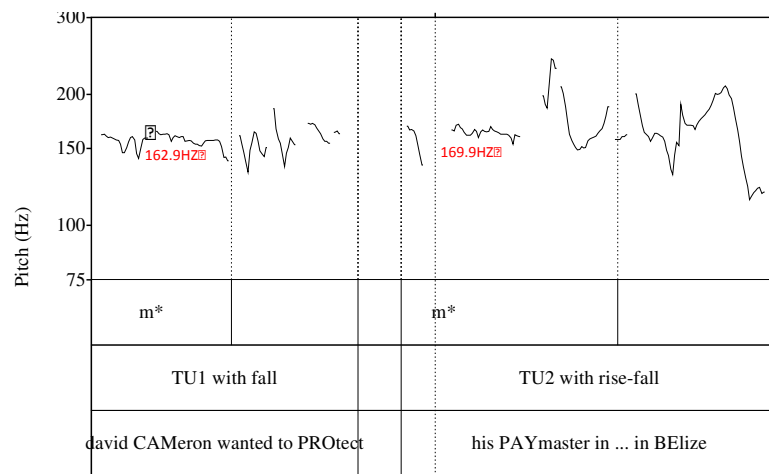


Fig 1: Face in the debates

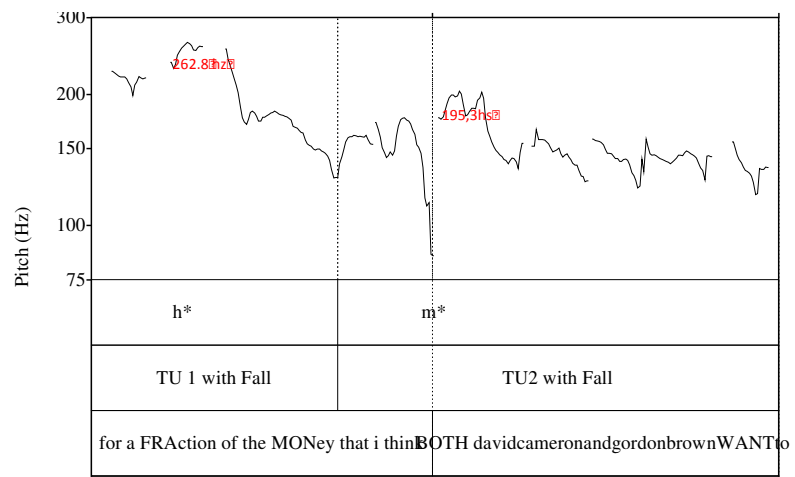


Spectrograph 1

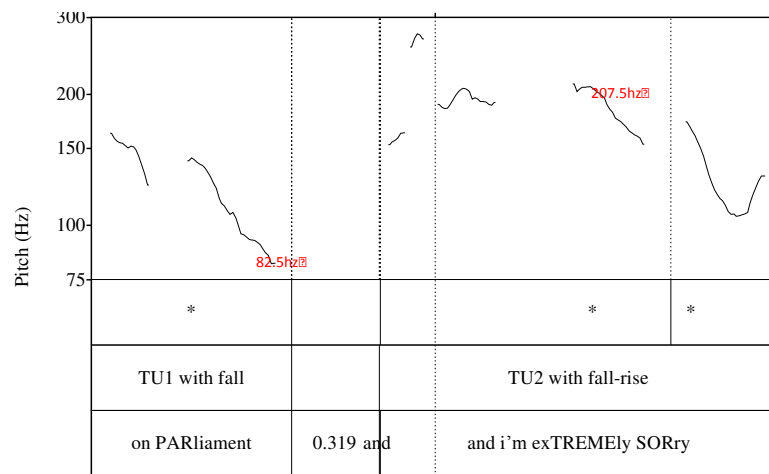


Spectrograph 2

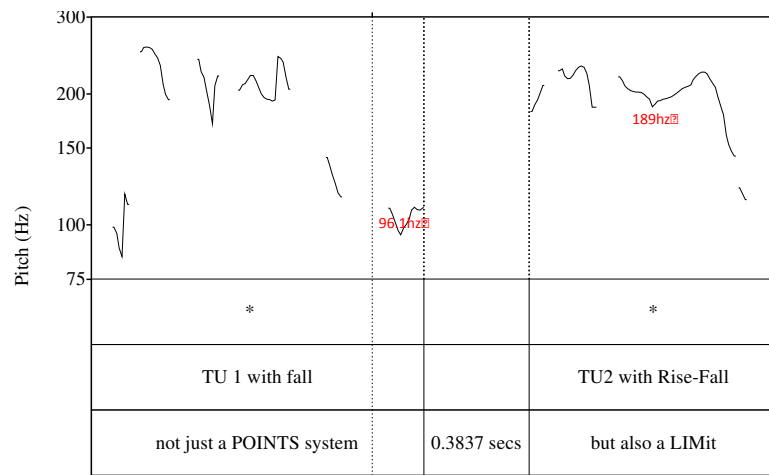




Spectrograph 3



Spectrograph 4: Paratone initial high key



Spectrograph 5: Paratone initial mid key

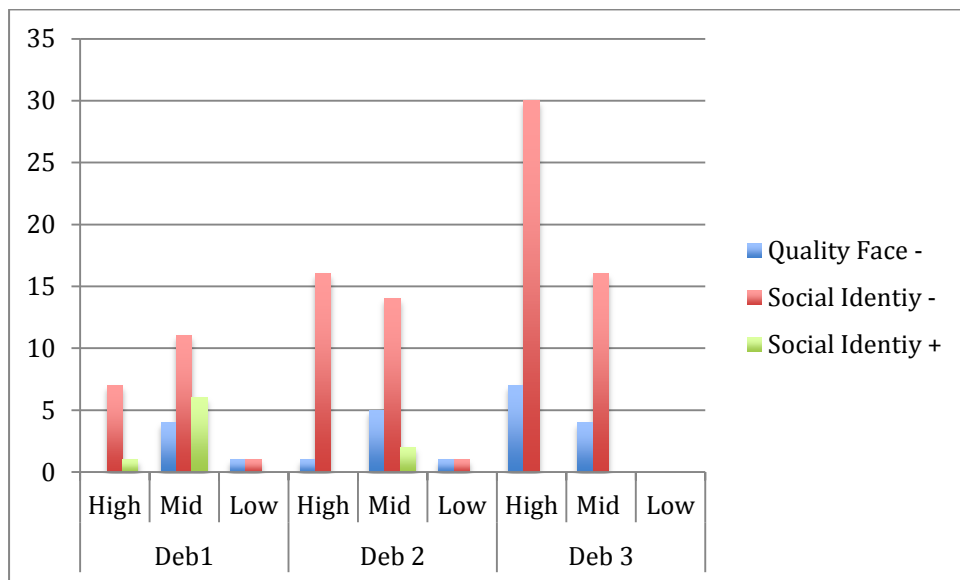


Fig 2: Face in Gordon Brown's Inter-leader references

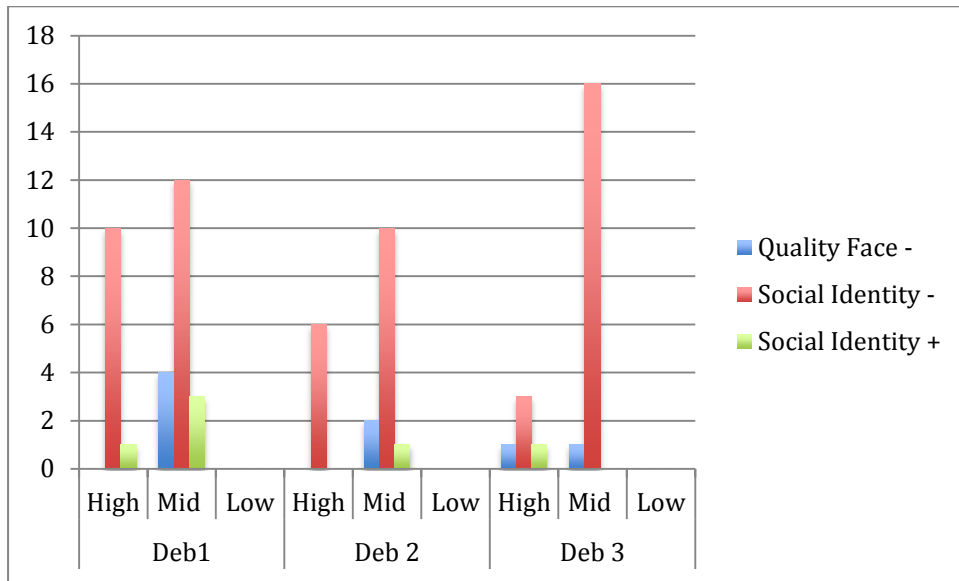


Figure 3: Face in Nick Clegg's Inter-leader references

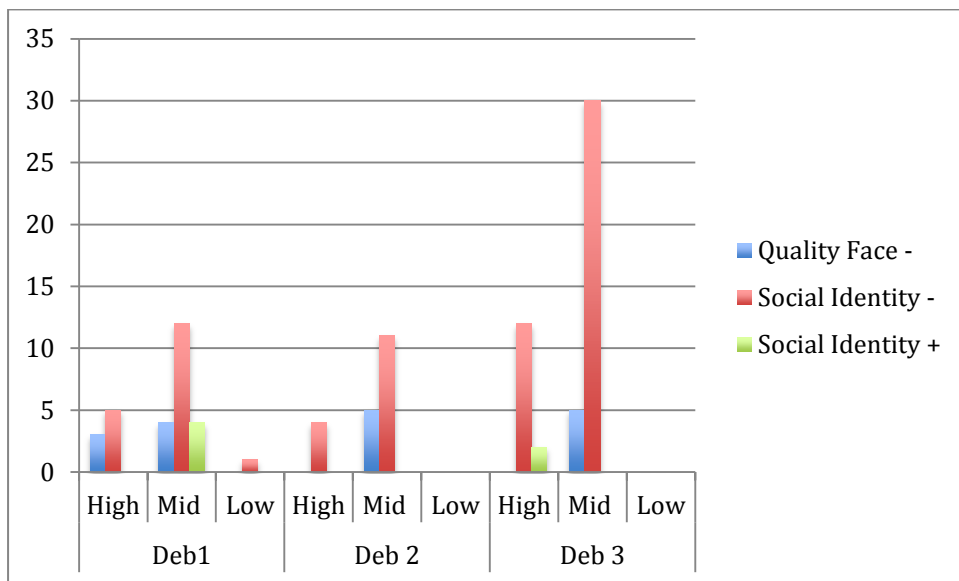


Figure 4: Face in David Cameron's Inter-leader references

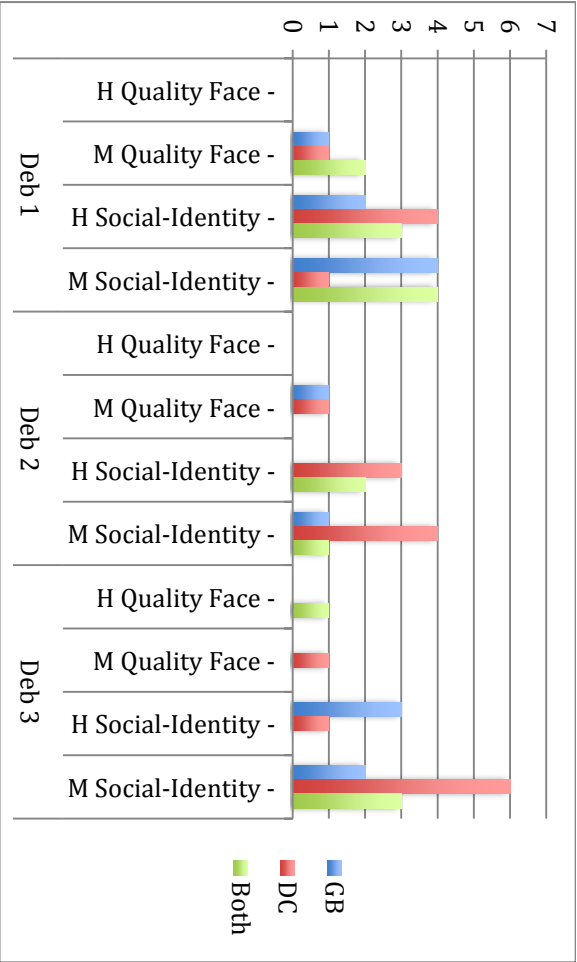


Fig 5: Nick Clegg's FTAs in the debates

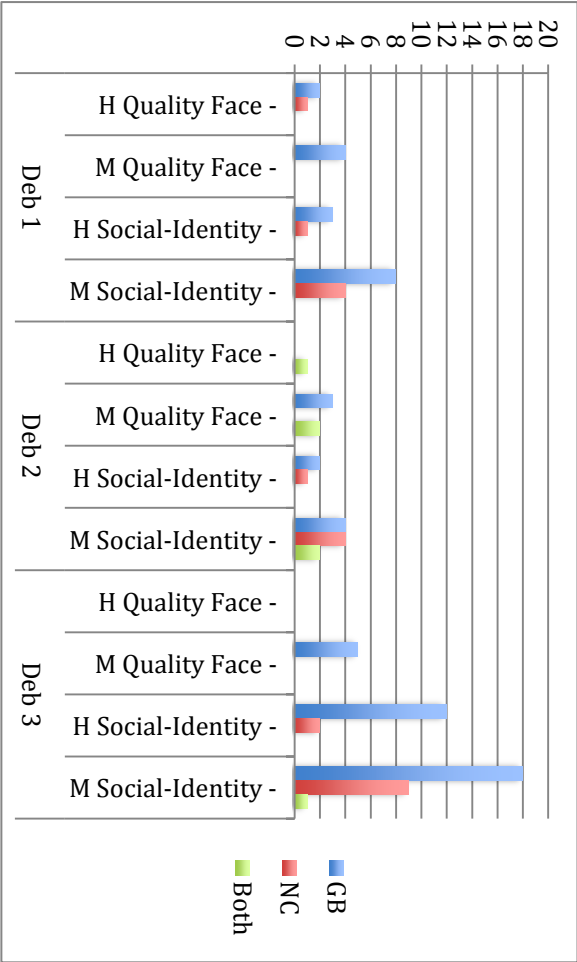


Fig 6: David Cameron's FTAs in the debates

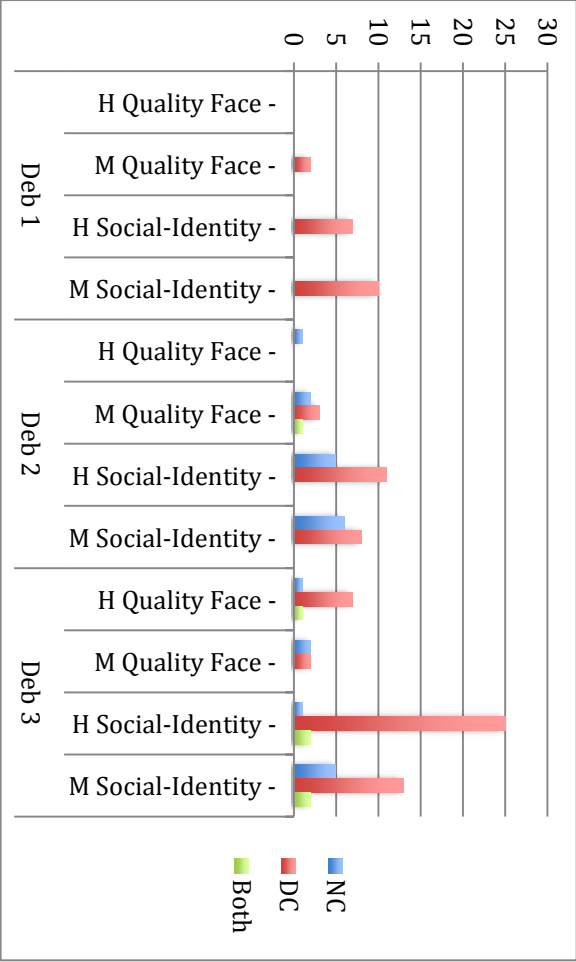


Fig 7: Gordon Brown's FTAs in the debates